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SEARCH FOR THEORIES TO SUPPORT THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY PROGRAM

The new Party program, scheduled for publication on July 30, has been the cause of lively debates among Soviet theoreticians.

The two major topics currently being argued in Soviet periodicals are the principle of "market turnover based on money" and the perseverance of "vestiges of capitalism" in Soviet youth.

The applicability of the former to the economic structure of Soviet society in the period of "intensified building of Communism" has been questioned by some members of the younger generation of Soviet economists.

The polemics on the latter topic center on giving the correct explanation for the origin of youthful views alien to Marxism-Leninism.

Another important topic of discussion is "the transition to a classless society" in the Soviet Union. It appears from an analysis of present Soviet domestic policy that Soviet society will keep its class structure for a long time. The stress in the Soviet Union on material rewards tends to strengthen class differences.

In their work on the new Party program, the Soviet leaders have to cope also with the so-called "contradiction of the socialist formation," involving the gap between the ever-increasing consumer demand and lagging productivity.

It is quite certain that these discussions are not initiated by the Soviet leaders to create an impression of increasing freedom in Soviet society. The habit of openly publishing ideological disagreements has been forced upon the Soviet leaders, and they are merely making the best of a bad situation.

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SEARCH FOR THEORIES TO SUPPORT THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY PROGRAM

Preparations for the important Twenty-second Communist Party Congress in October include far-reaching polemics among Soviet theoreticians. Many young theoreticians have of late been defending the purity of Marxist-Leninist theory and criticizing the older theoreticians, who are instructed by the Party to justify ideologically Khrushchev's revisionist statements and his practical policies.

One example of the numerous arguments in progress is the dispute over the applicability of the principle of "market turnover based on money" to the economic structure of Soviet society during the period of intensified building of Communism. This dispute began in 1952 after the publication of Stalin's last work, Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, and increased in intensity after the condemnation of this piece in 1956. There have been heated discussions of this principle in the last two years. In 1960, two works by Soviet economists I. Malyshev and V. Sobol, The Social Evaluation of Labor and Prices Under Socialism and Notes on Problems of a Balanced Economy, argued that the principle of market turnover based on money is not only inconsistent with the building of Communism, but is also inconsistent with the economic and sociological system in the socialist stage of development. Two old and experienced Soviet economists, L. Gatovsky and M. Sakov, were called upon to counter this dangerous viewpoint. They did so in issue No. 15, 1960, of Kommunist, accusing Malyshev and Sobol of an attempt to deprive such economic categories as trade, money, and Khozraschet (non-state financing) of a practical content. They asserted that production for the market, which is developing on the basis of ownership by society of the means of production, has become a fact. The Soviet type of

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production for the market is in principle a new type of social economy, Gatovsky and Sakov declared. Under this economy, the entire content, the functions and the purpose of price relations have altered fundamentally and have acquired a socialist character (p. 83). Malyshev and Sobol replied that "magic words," such as fundamental changes and differences in principle, do little to help clarify the real differences of socialism from a commodity economy" (Kommunist, No. 8, 1961, p. 84).

It is of interest that the Party leaders, while giving Malyshev and Sobol the opportunity to answer, had the editors of the magazine criticize their standpoint as "lacking a theoretical basis" and as being based exclusively on a "dogmatic approach." However, an analysis of both articles from the standpoint of classical Marxism will show that Malyshev and Sobol have convincingly shown the fallacy of Gatovsky's and Sakov's arguments and the errors in their approach to the question:

(Gatovsky and Sakov) consider it unnecessary to prove the market nature of production in a socialist society, they announce it as a fact. Yet the theory of socialist economy, like any genuinely scientific theory, must be based on an analysis of the facts... The supporters of the role of the market in socialist production presume without reason that this question has always been solved and that some indiscriminating persons are now making it debatable for the first time. (Kommunist, No. 8, 1961, pp. 82-83).

Malyshev and Sobol suggest that Communism and its first stage, socialism, are special types of systems, different from earlier types of society, because they are based on public ownership of the means of production. They oppose the view that a socialist society can include social systems based on both private and public ownership. In their view, Gatovsky and Sakov are making an unforgivable error by claiming that a market system that uses money controls production. "Such a trite approach to production for a market based on the use of money is unsuitable for even a popular explanation, and is of even less use for scientific analysis." The younger economists assert that according to Gatovsky and Sakov, "socialist relations are the backbone of market-money production. This implies that socialist relations are based on private ownership" (ibid., p. 85).

The editors of Kommunist admit that such relations in the USSR have their negative aspects since they make use of such anti-social elements as black marketeering, living on illegally earned income, private accumulation of money, or commercial transactions.

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Further they concede that,

Since the Communist Party is now trying to develop commodity-money relations existing in a socialist economy to strengthen the material interest of urban and rural workers in increasing output, such views completely contradict life (Kommunist, No. 8, 1961, p. 89).

They accuse Malyshev and Sobol of attempting to by-pass an "objectively necessary" stage in the gradual transition to Communism--"the very step at which it is still of vital importance to make every possible use of commodity-money relations in the interests of the building of Communism" (ibid.).

Defending the development of a market economy based on money--a revisionist concept in the eyes of classical Marxists--the editors of Kommunist accuse their opponents of being dogmatic in "in attempting to represent other writers as supporters of the non-socialist nature of our economy" and end their article with the rebuke that "the concept of comrades Malyshev and Sobol, in spite of their good intentions, has no theoretical basis and is in practice harmful" (ibid. p. 97).

An even more interesting debate now in progress concerns perseverance of ideological views alien to Marxist-Leninist teachings and of materialist world outlook--"vestiges of capitalism." Today such vestiges are widespread among young persons who were born at least two decades after the revolution. At a session of the Academy of Social Sciences of the Party Central Committee early this year, two extremes were seen in the explanations of these vestiges:

The first extreme is the tendency to go off into general discussions, to explain amoral acts solely with a consciousness that lags behind life. . . . The other extreme is the attempt to find for each vestige of capitalism its equivalent in. . . the life of our society, to make the principles of socialism responsible for such vestiges (Voprosy Filosofii, No. 5, p. 147).

Thus, while the first extreme constitutes a revision of one of the main principles of Marxism, that "life determines consciousness," the second extreme represents attempts to examine objectively what is happening in Soviet society today.

The Dean of the Academy of Social Sciences, Yu. Frantsev, asked:

"Is it possible in a socialist society that there are cases of the individual remaining aloof from the influence of socialist ideology?" "Yes," he admitted, "such cases are possible,
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since the influence of socialist ideology is not a simple automatic process, it presupposes an active struggle, major educational work" (Voprosy Filosofii, No. 5, 1961, p 44).

Frantsev was also compelled to admit that many explanations are found for the persistence of alien views: "some comrades said that the reason for the persistence was that... consciousness lagged behind life. Others criticized this viewpoint... They declared that vestiges of capitalism are a social phenomenon. Some writers, having lost the thread of argument, set about seeking the reasons in the social structure of our society (ibid.).

Frantsev's reference to the "loss of the thread of argument" is Soviet ideological jargon for tendencies of Soviet sociologists and philosophers toward objective analysis, which unavoidably leads to a discussion of the most critical problem of Soviet society--its class structure. At a routine session of the Soviet Sociological Association, held in February of this year, V. S. Semenov read a paper on "The Change In Social Structure Of The USSR," which denied that "social structure in all industrial societies undergoes equal development, be this society capitalist or socialist." Semenov had to concede, however, the complexity of the problems inherent in the abolishment of class structure. In his opinion, classless society will become a reality with the abolishment, in stages, of the following class distinctions: 1) between all forms of ownership; 2) between town and country; 3) between mental and manual work; and 4) between haves and have-nots. Semenov added: "When all these differences will have been removed, it will be possible say that the classes have been abolished (Voprosy Filosofii, No. 5, 1961, p. 1553).

The new principle that uneven distribution of wealth will be the last class difference to be abolished indicates that Soviet society will long remain a class society and that the necessary theoretical justification will be found. An analysis of present domestic policy, which is based on stressing material interest, suggests that changes in the social structure of Soviet society are not aimed at removing class differences but, rather, at strengthening them.

In their work on the new Party program, the Soviet Party leaders and theoreticians are doing their utmost to find their way out of the impasse of the so-called "basic contradiction of the socialist formation,"--a result of Soviet rivalry with Peiping for ideological leadership of the Communist world movement. The Soviet theoreticians argue that

In the course of the development of a socialist society, a new nonantagonistic contradiction arises between the level of production attained at a given

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moment and the rapidly growing demands of the workers. This contradiction differs fundamentally from the contradiction which exists under capitalism between production and demand, since it expresses not a lag of demand behind the growth of output, but a demand which outstrips productivity. (Malaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, The Small Soviet Encyclopedia, vol. 6, p. 1010).

Having established in this "dialectical manner" the constant lag of output behind the needs of the population under socialism, the Soviet theoreticians are preparing the necessary theory to justify an extension of this "natural phenomenon" to the period of the building of Communism. They have stated that "the contradiction in question is the basic contradiction of Communist formation as a whole, of socialism in particular..." (Voprosy Filosofii, No. 8, 1958, pp. 138-139).

Compared with Khrushchev's thesis that Communism can be built only after the achievement of an abundance of material and spiritual values, the above quotation suggests that the builders of a Communist society find themselves caught in a vicious circle: material abundance cannot be achieved while production lags and demand grows. And without abundance, Communism cannot be built.

The present review has touched on only a few of the disagreements over economic, ideological and sociological problems. Long discussions are presently being waged in almost all spheres of the social sciences. It is quite certain that these discussions are not, as some think, inspired by the Party leaders, to create an impression of increasing freedom and democratization in Soviet society. Open discussion of such disagreements is dangerous, since it inspires a tendency toward free-thinking and heretical opinions on the part of Soviet intelligentsia and students. The habit of openly publishing existing ideological and theoretical disagreements has been forced on the Soviet leaders, and they are merely making the best of a bad situation by suggesting that there is a certain amount of intellectual freedom in the Soviet Union.